

Five things you need to know today



Entrepreneurial Spark awards this evening

Edinburgh based groups finalists in the Autism Professional Awards

Auld Reekie Roller Girls

Tough Mudder

Footloose

The brand new businesses which have been involved in the [Entrepreneurial Spark](#)'s Edinburgh Hatchery are all in the running for awards which could win them a share of £35,000 this evening. The businesses have all been working with The Royal Bank of Scotland and KPMG to help them take their businesses forward from the start-up stage to a scaled up model.

The entrepreneurs have been skilling up in the last six months and now they will pitch their businesses at tonight's gala evening. There will also be speeches from Entrepreneurial Spark's team of Enablers, and guest speaker Garry Stewart, CEO and founder of The Chopping Company. Other events are being held tonight too across the whole of the UK with around £250,000 available in cash prizes.

Carl Haagensen, Entrepreneur Development Manager, Royal Bank of Scotland, said: "The Royal Bank of Scotland is delighted to celebrate the efforts of the Chiclets at the Entrepreneurial Awards.

"All have shown a tremendous amount of passion, creativity and

commitment to their businesses and this event is an opportunity for everyone involved to take a moment to see how far they have progressed and the difference their hard work has made.

“We wish everyone the greatest success and hope the winners’ stories inspire others to ‘go do’ and make their business dream a reality.”

Phil Charles, Head of Enterprise at KPMG in Scotland, said: “Business incubators such as Entrepreneurial Spark play a pivotal role in supporting start-ups in their first, crucial, stages of growth. The Entrepreneurial Awards give those businesses a taste of competing in a real pitching environment, helping equip them with the skills necessary to secure investment in the future. We wish all the Chiclets taking part at this year’s awards the best of luck.”

Entrepreneurial Spark founder and chief executive Jim Duffy said: “The Entrepreneurial Awards have grown alongside our network of Hatcheries, and the latest round will be the biggest yet. The cash prizes are an excellent way of boosting some of our most promising businesses and accelerating their growth, and the events also provide valuable networking opportunities and pitching practice.

“Entrepreneurs need to be able to explain their business briefly and concisely, and they never know when they might meet a potential investor, client or partner. That’s why we drill our Chiclets to ensure that they are clear on their goals and able to pitch their ideas.”

Entrepreneurial Spark is the world’s largest free accelerator for start-up and scale-up businesses, and competition for the latest intake to its accelerator programmes was intense. To find your nearest Hatchery and register interest for the August 2016 intake, visit www.entrepreneurial-spark.com.



The Yard and Pasda are in the running for awards for 'innovative family support' at the National Autistic Society's Autism Professional Awards 2016.

The Yard is a purpose-built indoor and outdoor adventure playcentre for disabled children and young people, including autism spectrum conditions. It was nominated for the award by a group of parents. Mum, Dora Roden, said: "Children are encouraged to suggest games and activities for the club, and even unusual ideas are carried through. One youngster suggested a jacuzzi night, so a hot tub was hired! The range of activities is amazing – from arts to board games, to outings and baking. Thanks to the club, my son has gained confidence, made friends, had a huge amount of fun. The Yard is a sanctuary for both parents and children."

Celine Sinclair, chief executive of The Yard said: "We are delighted that our work with autistic children and young people has been nominated for this year's awards. Our specialist team of playworkers are committed to building relationships with families who use our service, through creating trust, building confidence and ensuring that their children get the support they need to enable them to thrive. We know that what we do makes a real difference and being nominated for this award is truly fantastic because being a small Scottish based charity, we rarely receive national recognition for the important role we play in the lives of all the 2,000 disabled children and young people who use our services."

Pasda is the only organisation in Edinburgh and the Lothians supporting families of adults on the autism spectrum who often struggle to cope with their caring role. It has been nominated for its 'Connect' service which helps isolated carers meet others experiencing the same challenges.

Danuta Szerszynska, a project worker at Pasda, said: "We are delighted to have been shortlisted for this award. Our carers

face huge daily challenges supporting their autistic family members, and can often feel stressed, isolated and depressed. The flexibility Connect provides is hugely important, enabling carers who may struggle to attend groups and meetings to have that much needed support from someone who truly understands. We have seen amazing results from our Connect Service, with over 75 per cent of carers saying their lives have improved since joining. It's great that the mutual support carers can gain from talking to each other is being recognised."

Jenny Paterson, director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, said: "The autism community gets together once a year to recognise services, like The Yard and Pasda, whose work makes a huge difference to the lives of autistic people and their families and carers.

"This year yielded 217 nominations in total, our largest number of nominations yet. It's heartening to be able to recognise more people and services year on year, as more people are inspired to work in the field of autism and create a better life for those on the autism spectrum."

The Yard and Pasda are two of nine finalists based in Scotland. There are a total of 38 finalists across the UK in 12 categories. The shortlist was decided by a panel of 11 autism experts, who were looking for innovation, creativity, impact and sustainability.

The winner will be revealed at the National Autistic Society's Professional Conference on Tuesday 1 March 2016 in Telford.



The Auld Reekie Roller Girls are playing against Dresden Pioneers at Meadowbank on Saturday 30 January 2016. Doors open at 2pm. The match against the German visitors promises to be an exciting beginning to the 2016 roller derby season. If you haven't been to a match then steady your nerves beforehand. It

is exciting, exhilarating and non-stop!

Natalie Barrett, ARRG All Star Reserves Team Captain said: *"Building on the strength and positivity that came with a strong 2015 season, the Reserves are hitting the ground running for the first game of 2016, and we are hungry for a win. Dresden Pioneers will give us a very tough game, but we're going to bring all the experience and development we gained from a challenging couple of games against Copenhagen and Malmo at the end of last year."*

ARRG are one of the top ranked teams in the UK and one of the pioneering leagues in Europe who have worked tirelessly to contribute to the global development of roller derby, the fastest growing sport in the UK. The Dresden Pioneers, having established the first roller derby team in Saxony in 2012 are now one of the top ranked teams in Germany.

Hosts ARRG will be fighting for a win on home track and to kick start their 2016 season but the Dresden team are sure to bring all the might of Saxony onto the home team in what promises to be a fierce and exciting game.

Natalie continued: *"We're delighted to welcome some new faces as well as many of our familiar ARRG favourites and have all kept our off-skates training going strong with winter bootcamps. We'll be focussing this season on becoming a tight-knit, strong, fearsome and focussed team with the same level of competitiveness and fun that defines ARRG. We are raring to go for the first game of 2016!"*

Laura Mietzsch, Dresden Pioneers Team Captain said: *"We have started this year highly motivated, working hard in fitness and skating practices. For the upcoming German division we want to be stronger than ever, which, I think is the minimum you can do in preparation when you are about to start the session with a game against a league called the Auld Reekie Roller Girls!"*

"As a team that is used to travelling around by bus, we are hugely excited to catch what will be only our second flight in Roller Derby Dresden history and to travel to Scotland to face

Edinburgh's Auld Reekie Roller Girls All Star Reserves. Also, most of our team have never been to Scotland before and are very much looking forward to exploring the city – the best possible start to our year!"

Doors open at 2pm before and the game begins at 2.30pm.

Auld Reekie Roller Girls V Dresden Pioneers

Saturday 30 January 2016

Doors Open 2:00pm

Meadowbank Sports Stadium, Edinburgh, EH7 6AE

Tickets: £5 online, £8 (£5 concessions) on the door, free entry for those under 14

For further info and tickets visit: arrg.co.uk/promotion/arrg-all-star-reserves-vs-dresden-roller-derby



Heard of Tough Mudder?

This is one of those events where you have to clamber over obstacles and literally get muddy.

It is not a race, but a challenge. The main idea is to be part of a team and to help others get through the course. And yes it is a way of raising funds for charity too.

Read more [here](#).

Next month at the Festival Theatre the brand new production of Footloose: The Musical will be on stage.

Gareth Gates and Maureen Nolan (of the pop family The Nolans) will lead the cast of a show which is based on the 1984 screen sensation starring Kevin Bacon. Gates came to public attention through Pop Idol as far back as 2001 and since then has had wide success with record sales and a successful career on stage. One of Nolan's best known stage roles was as Mrs Johnstone in Blood Brothers.

Tuesday 16 – Saturday 20 February 2016

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